



**USAID | MACEDONIA**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Feb.2, 2006  
Press office: +389 (0)2 308-0446  
Cell phone: +389 (0)70 323-807  
e-mail: [talbor@usaid.gov](mailto:talbor@usaid.gov)  
<http://macedonia.usaid.gov>

## PRESS RELEASE

### National Opinion Poll Shows Increased Optimism

An opinion poll of 1,106 adult Macedonians, conducted from January 15 to 18, 2006, finds a significant increase in optimism among the respondents. Currently, 27% of respondents believe things are moving in the right direction; a 9% increase since September 2005 when this poll was last conducted. The percentage of those who believe Macedonia is moving in the wrong direction has fallen nine percentage points, to 38%, from the September poll.

The opinion survey was carried out by the International Republican Institute (IRI), through an ongoing project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), a part of the U.S. Mission in Macedonia. The actual survey was conducted by the local research supplier, Brima, in collaboration with an American research firm, Williams and Associates of Salem, Massachusetts. The results of this poll were presented to representatives of various political parties during the last week of January 2006.

“Public opinion polls are an important means in representative democracies to keep the political parties and leadership in touch with the issues of concern to the citizens they represent. We are pleased to make this information available to the people, media, and political leaders of Macedonia,” comments Dick Goldman, Mission Director of USAID in Macedonia.

“The outlook of Macedonians, across all of our normal assessment criteria, has grown more optimistic since the survey in September 2005. In many cases, we are recording historically significant responses to our standard set of questions.”

When asked if their personal economic situation has improved since 2002, the number (currently at 14%) has been essentially stable since the survey in April of 2003. However, the percentage of those who say their economic situation has gotten worse since 2002 has declined by four percent, setting a new historical low for this question at 50%.

Also of note is an improvement in outlook among Macedonian citizens regarding the state of the country's economy in the next two years. The current survey shows a 12 percent decrease in the number of respondents who believe the economic situation in Macedonia will be worse two years from now. At 26%, this figure sets another historical low for this survey program. Meanwhile, long-term optimism has increased by ten percentage points to 35%. For only the third time in this survey program, optimists outpace pessimists by a margin of 35% to 26%.

Despite the generally positive outlook, eighty-three percent of respondents claim that unemployment, the economy, and the standard of living are the most important problems facing Macedonia today; a 3% decrease since September. A majority of respondents (53%) view lack of employment opportunities as the single most important problem, with an additional 13% citing the economy, and 17% citing low standards of living as the most pressing problem facing Macedonia.

More than nine of every ten respondents continue to believe that foreign investment is the key element in solidifying Macedonia's future economic growth. When asked from where the foreign investment should come, we note a significant shift in preference from the US toward Europe. In September 2005, Macedonians showed a preference for the United States over Europe as a source of foreign investment, by a margin of 25% to 19%. In the latest survey, the positions are switched, with Europe preferred to the US by a 27% to 15% margin. However, most respondents continue to believe that no single source of foreign investment is more desirable than the others (49%).

Support for Macedonia's membership in NATO and the EU continues at very strong levels, with support for entering the European Union rising 1% to 96%. Support for NATO is currently at 90%, a new historical high for this response.

The results of the opinion poll are available at <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>

---

The American people, through USAID, have invested more than \$400 million in Macedonia since 1993. More than 30 projects worth \$35 million a year are currently being implemented. These projects are designed to support Macedonia's transition to a free market-based, multi-ethnic democracy. They include initiatives to accelerate economic growth, develop democratic institutions, and educate citizens for a modern economy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.

The International Republican Institute (IRI) works with Macedonian political parties to enhance their ability to identify and respond to issues of concern among the electorate and to provide citizens with increased avenues of participation. IRI utilizes public opinion polls to help political parties in issue identification and advocacy, message development, and communications and voter outreach. IRI polls are designed to keep parties grounded in the issues of real concern to the electorate.